

By Joshua Henkin

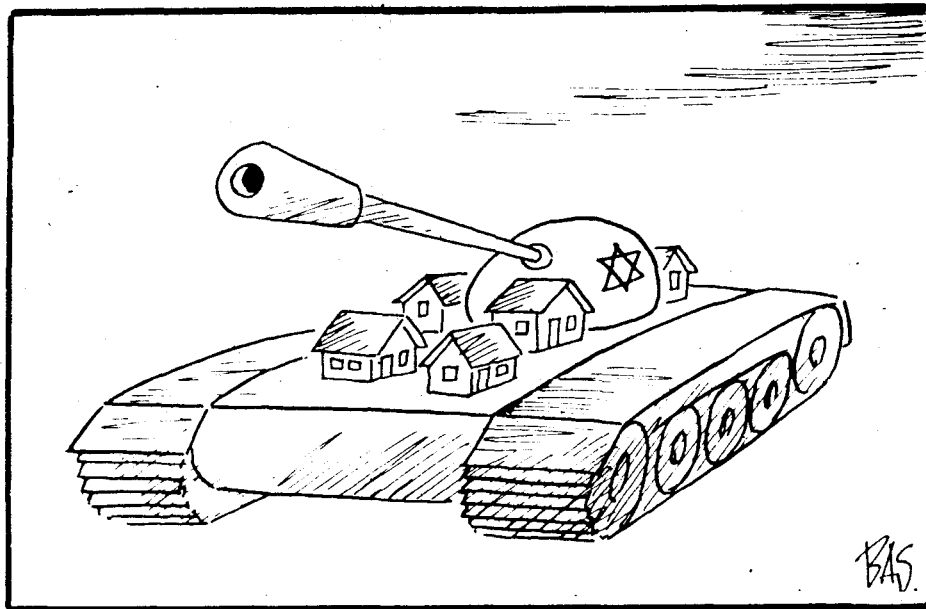
FOR AMERICAN JEWS LIKE MYSELF, DEEPLY committed to the state of Israel yet outraged by Israeli policies on the West Bank, these past few months have been trying. And as an editor of the only Jewish publication to call for an immediate end to the occupation and the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state, I find myself overcome not only by distress, but by loneliness. For if the Jewish community has traditionally agreed on anything it's that one doesn't criticize Israel in public.

The reasons for such a consensus are numerous and complicated, but nearly all of them have to do with the belief that Jews already have too many enemies to be airing their dirty laundry in public. A brief reminder that less than half a century ago one of every three of our ancestors was turned into ashes in Hitler's furnaces makes everyone but the most daring of Jews bite his tongue. The growing number of American Jews beginning to flout this tradition of silence illustrates the extent that disaffection with Israel's policies has grown. For every Jew who speaks out in public, thousands echo such sentiments in private.

Silence isn't golden: Ironically, most American Jews fail to understand that they cannot help but take a stand on Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Silence is impossible. In other words, American Jews are under the mistaken impression that they simply can say "we have no right to interfere in Israel's internal affairs," and allow Israel to work out its own problems.

To make such a claim is to pretend that Israel is a monolith, an indivisible entity that makes decisions without internal opposition. Nothing could be further from the truth. A sizable minority of Israelis oppose the occupation, and there is every indication that its ranks are swelling. Like all decisions made by parliamentary democracies, the continued occupation is a policy that has arisen out of heated political debate. It is impossible to say that one supports Israel on this issue, because there is no such thing as Israel's stance on the occupation. Israel is home to opponents as well as to supporters of the occupation, and failure to speak out is tantamount to endorsement of the supporters. Perhaps that is why in the current issue of *TIKKUN* Knesset member Abba Eban begs American Jews to oppose the occupation in public. He recognizes that neutrality is impossible, that silence speaks as loudly as words.

Silence on the Palestinians supports the Israeli regime



More fundamentally, most American Jews fail to realize that failure to speak out against the occupation threatens the security of Israel. Painting a false dichotomy between the moralist and the realist, these Jews claim that Israel cannot afford to adhere to moral principles, that it has too many enemies to do anything but engage in the hardball politics of *realpolitik*.

The truth of the matter, however, is that Israel cannot afford to be immoral, that in this instance the moral and the politically expedient paths overlap. For Israel's survival depends on continued military and

U.S. support of Israel is not carte blanche. It should depend on a change in policy.

economic support from the U.S. Such support allows Israel to maintain military parity with Syria, supplied by the Soviet Union.

Yet Israel fails to recognize that American support is not *carte blanche*. Arguments that the U.S. has a strategic interest in supporting Israel notwithstanding, there are many reasons for the U.S. to shift its support to some of the Arab states. American corporate interests would be greatly advanced by greater support of oil-rich Arab countries, and such interests have already proven powerful in bringing about the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia. What's more, the growing U.S. budget deficit is leading many politicians to advocate cuts of military aid to all foreign countries, Israel included. In short, strategic interests are not enough to guarantee continued American support. With U.S.-Soviet relations improving, future administrations are less likely to look at the world through the narrow lens of East-West conflict. In any case, even the most rigid Cold Warrior recognizes that the Middle East is not about to become a Soviet satellite, that Syria aside, no love is lost between most of the Arab countries, particularly those with strong fundamentalist Moslem influences, and the Soviet Union.

Morality and security: Ultimately, the U.S. has continued to support Israel less because of strategic interests than because Israel adheres to democratic principles. Granted, Congress and the administration have responded to lobbying pressure from American Jews, but American Jews themselves have been committed to Israel not simply because it is a place where many Jews live, but because it is a society founded upon democratic values. For the great majority of America's 6 million Jews, support for Israel has become the principal

form of Jewish identification. That this phenomenon has occurred, that Judaism has become a national religion of sorts, is possible only because Israel has been committed to worthwhile moral principles.

But if the occupation continues, if Americans continue to perceive Israel as oppressors, as beaters of civilians, then American Jews will no doubt be much more hesitant to support Israel, as will the U.S. government. That American Jewish donations to Israel have not yet decreased is not surprising. In times of crisis, communities tend to band together. But as time goes on, Israel will find itself harder pressed to gain the support of Americans, both Jewish and non-Jewish. When that happens, Israel's security will indeed be in jeopardy.

Israel would be wise to end the occupation for other reasons, too. Perhaps the most significant development of the last few months has been the fact that Palestinians living within Israel's pre-1967 borders have joined in the struggle. If these Palestinians continue to become more radical, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin may feel "compelled" to implement his "iron fist" policy not only on the West Bank but throughout Israel proper. It is perfectly conceivable that over a period of time a city such as Jerusalem could begin to take on the visage of Beirut.

Of course, one can hope that American Jews will start to criticize the occupation, not simply out of self-interest, but out of a deep moral vision. Such a vision is steeped in Jewish culture, which boasts a Bible permeated with commandments not to oppress downtrodden minorities as well as a strong prophetic tradition of moral rebuke for those who have strayed from the righteous path.

In the current issue of *TIKKUN*, Israeli peace activist Hannan Hever writes that American Jews "must regard all silence about the occupation and all support of the current Israeli regime as an attack on those of us who are fighting for a moral Israel." For Hever, Israel is not simply a plot of land, no matter how rich historically that plot of land may be. Nor is it simply a haven for Jews, no matter how successfully it has fulfilled that role. Israel is, first and foremost, a society that has committed itself to moral values. It is for such a society that Israeli boys have proved willing to die, and for such a society that American Jews ought to be fighting.

Joshua Henkin is an editor of *TIKKUN* magazine.

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Feel overworked? More and more Americans do

INCREASING NUMBERS OF AMERICANS ARE finding themselves overworked. The hours spent earning a living seem to leave too little time for necessary domestic labor and for leisure.

A recent Harris poll found that people believe their work hours have risen 20 percent since 1973, while leisure time has fallen by 32 percent. One study found that "resting" and "relaxing" have recently become favorite leisure pursuits. While government statistics do not show any rise in the work week as officially measured, the widespread feeling of overwork picked up by the pollsters seems to have a real basis. It appears that the long historical trend in capitalist societies of a progressive reduction of the hours of work may have reversed, but in ways that do not show up readily in the statistics.

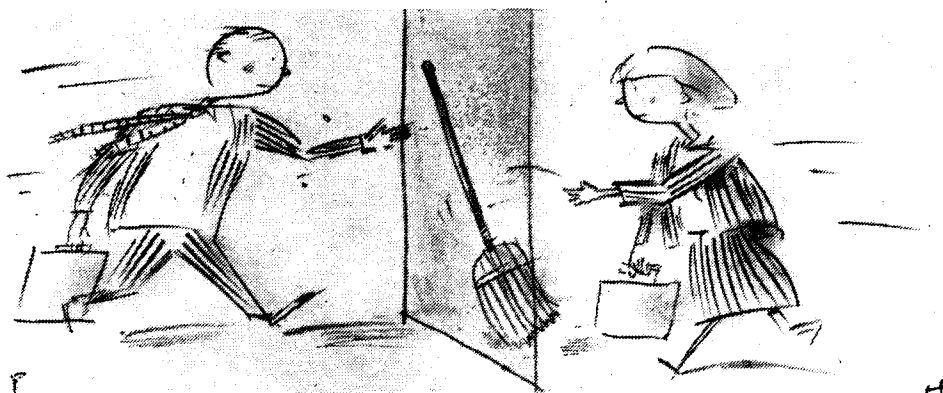
The old overwork: Historians have found that when capitalism first arose in Europe during the 16th century, it set in motion a gradual increase in working hours. European peasants in the late Middle Ages may have been poor and oppressed, but they did not work long hours. As the number of saints rose, the number of holidays rose accordingly, leaving fewer and fewer workdays. And the absence of any supervision left the producers to work at their own pace and intensity, which apparently was not very arduous by today's standards. Similarly, the other major group of producers, town artisans, worked neither very long nor hard, according to historians' accounts.

This changed dramatically as wage labor replaced independent peasant and artisan production. The new capitalist class was able to extend workers' daily labor hours and workdays per year far beyond the previous standard. In England workdays of over 12 hours became common. At the same time, the intensity of labor was greatly increased, particularly once machinery became prevalent in the 19th century. This process of extending and intensifying the labor process was fought out between capitalists and workers over several centuries. Capitalists' success in this struggle produced a growing pool of profits, as workers worked harder and longer without any significant increase in living standards. Overwork was a major means by which capitalism established itself, created great new fortunes, and financed rapid economic growth in its early phase.

The declining workweek: Today this is viewed as a thing of the past, a historical relic of the bad old days when capitalists got rich off the sweat of workers. And indeed, in the middle of the 19th century the tide did turn in the struggle over the workweek. Mounting massive campaigns for a reduced workweek in Europe and North America, workers succeeded in gradually reducing the hours of work.

In the U.S., the campaigns for a ten-hour day, and then an eight-hour day, eventually succeeded through a combination of legislation, union contract provisions, and a change in customary standards. The average workweek in manufacturing fell relatively steadily from 60.0 hours in 1890 to 51.0 hours in 1920 and 40.5 hours in 1950. Since the late '40s the manufacturing work-

c 1988 Peter Hannan



week has fluctuated around 40 hours.

However, declining work hours did not translate into declining profits for the capitalists. By a combination of technological innovation, increased use of machinery, and rising educational levels of workers, the output of commodities per hour of labor rose rapidly enough to permit rising profits to co-exist with declining hours of work. In fact, productivity rose fast enough so that workers are able to win not only shorter hours but also rising real weekly wages. Between 1890 and 1945, real (inflation-corrected) weekly pay in manufacturing more than doubled while weekly hours fell by nearly one-third.

Women enter the paid labor force: Over this same period of a declining workweek, women gradually increased their participation in paid labor. In 1890 only 18.2 percent of women over 14 were in the labor force. During the next fifty years, female labor force participation grew slowly, rising by 1.5 percentage points per decade to 25.7 percent in 1940.

After 1940 a sharp break occurred in the trend, creating one of the most remarkable socioeconomic events of the postwar period. From 1940 to 1980, female labor force participation rose from about one-fourth to slightly over one-half of women over age 16, an increase of 5.6 percentage points per decade. The increase was greatest for women with small children, whose

American capitalism, which produced high living standards and labor-saving technology, has found a new way to overwork people.

participation rate now exceeds 50%. The increase was fastest in the '70s, rising by 8.2 percent.

What has caused the rapid entrance of women into paid labor? One might think that the introduction of household labor-saving devices, the transfer of the last stages of consumer goods processing from home to business, and the sharp reduction of the number of children born to the average woman would have drastically reduced female domestic labor hours, freeing women to work for pay. But studies show that non-employed women still put in the same number of hours of domestic labor as they used to, but that the nature of their labor has changed.

Women formerly produced goods essential to family survival: they grew food in the garden and produced household items. As capitalism took over such production,

women's household labor shifted toward what economist Marilyn Power has termed maintenance labor. That is, women became responsible for purchasing and caring for the growing stock of market-obtained consumer goods, as well as the traditional service of caring for other household members. The growing dependence on obtaining necessities in the market required more money, which tended to push women into paid work to earn the money to buy the things women had previously produced at home.

This push was accompanied by a growing pull after World War II. By the '40s American capitalism had exhausted its traditional source of additional wage labor necessary for growth: independent producers in agriculture. Since the 19th century the American countryside, and through immigration, the countryside elsewhere, had supplied new labor for capitalist expansion. By the '40s the American countryside had shrunk to a small percent of the population, while political conditions prevented immigration on a sufficient scale to meet the need. The only place where large stores of potential wage laborers could be found was in the household. Furthermore, after World War II several occupations and sectors that grew particularly rapidly were ones that had traditionally employed women, such as clerical work and the retail trade sector.

Thus, capitalism pushed and pulled women out of the home and into wage labor.

Until 1973 the average real wage rose steadily, suggesting that growing material deprivation could not explain the movement of women into wage labor. But after 1973 real wages began to fall, declining to a level 13.8 percent below the 1973 level by 1986. Growing difficulty maintaining family living standards may have been a major reason during the past 15 years.

Effects of rising female labor force participation: The rapid entrance of women into paid labor has had profound effects on American economic and social life. In capitalist society, working for pay brings greater power and independence than working at home and being dependent on a spouse's income for survival. Rising female paid labor undermines male dominance in the home. And it undoubtedly played a role in stimulating the rebirth of the women's movement in the late '60s. That movement, together with the growing role of women workers in the economy, led to challenges to the pervasive occupational segregation and pay discrimination that women had long faced.

The progressive developments initiated by capitalists are usually a two-edged sword. The introduction of machinery by capitalism 200 years ago promised abundance and the elimination of back-breaking

toil, yet its initial effect was to prolong the workday and drive down wages. Similarly, the recent movement of women into wage labor provides the basis for the eventual emancipation of women and the establishment of equality between the sexes. But at the same time rising female participation in paid labor underlies the problem raised at the beginning of this column: overwork.

While the paid workweek per worker has remained unchanged since 1940, the average number of paid workers per family has risen. The doubling of female labor force participation since 1940 is roughly similar to a 20 percent increase in the average family's paid workweek.

One offsetting factor is the ability when both spouses work for pay to purchase goods and services to replace domestic labor. Fast food, TV dinners and daycare are examples of such replacements. Still, one study found that employed women with children do only about 2 hours less domestic labor per day than do non-employed women with children.

Therefore, the growing participation of women in paid labor, accompanied by only a small decrease in domestic labor, means overwork for women. And to the extent that men share domestic labor with women, the overwork is shared by both spouses. Growing numbers of families find themselves stretched to the breaking point, struggling to earn the income to maintain their accustomed living standard while still fulfilling their domestic responsibilities.

It is ironic that, even in the stage of capitalism that has produced high living standards and that continually introduces new labor-saving technologies, the system has found a new way to overwork people. ■

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